

Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning Sector Update

Highlights of Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Activities | OCTOBER 2014

SECTOR OVERVIEW

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) integrates monitoring, evaluation, and learning (ME&L) activities into emergency response and disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs worldwide to improve the quality of programming, enhance accountability, and ensure that USAID/OFDA-supported assistance is appropriate and effective. As a critical component of program management, ME&L helps USAID/OFDA and its partners understand the progress and results of recent and ongoing humanitarian responses so that future programs can better save lives, alleviate human suffering, and reduce the social and economic impacts of humanitarian emergencies. In FY 2014, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$5,000,000 in direct support for ME&L activities, including more than \$4,500,000 in USAID/OFDA-initiated third party monitoring programs; nearly \$400,000 ME&L-focused humanitarian studies, analysis or applications; and more than \$100,000 to support internal learning exercises. USAID/OFDA's ME&L support complements and builds upon ME&L work conducted by partners in their existing humanitarian programs.

SUPPORTING THIRD-PARTY MONITORING IN DIFFICULT-TO-ACCESS AREAS

In countries experiencing complex emergencies, security concerns can prevent USAID/OFDA and expatriate partner staff from conducting regular site visits to monitor the progress of programs. In such cases, contracting a third party to conduct quantitative and qualitative output monitoring and activity verification is both highly relevant and useful. Third-party monitoring allows USAID/OFDA to access independent data on the progress of programs, allowing USAID/OFDA and its partners to make real-time adjustments to programs to improve the quality of assistance in complex emergencies. Third-party monitoring programs can also inform USAID/OFDA strategic decisions regarding future program design. In FY 2014, USAID/OFDA provided \$4,500,000 in support to third-party monitoring in complex emergencies.

ADVANCING THE QUALITY OF IMPACT EVALUATIONS

Donors and individual contributors donate billions of dollars annually toward providing humanitarian assistance. Performance evaluations play a key role in helping donors and humanitarian agencies understand the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coverage, and sustainability of their programs. However, only impact evaluations can identify the relationship between the programs and the results on the ground. Impact evaluations can also answer critical questions, such as whether humanitarian assistance reached the right people; if aid was sufficient and delivered at the right time; and, most importantly, whether the support made a difference and, if so what, at what cost?

Through a partnership with the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), USAID/OFDA is supporting humanitarian partner International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3iE) to explore and advance impact evaluations—assessments that measure the change in an outcome attributable to a defined intervention—applied in humanitarian contexts to improve evidence-based decision making by the humanitarian community.

The first major component of USAID/OFDA's support to 3iE focused on developing a scoping and methods paper related to conducting impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts, which was presented at a USAID- and DFID-sponsored workshop in the U.K. in March. The second major component of the grant will help 3iE conduct two systematic reviews

related to likely impact evaluation topics regarding humanitarian interventions. FY 2014 USAID/OFDA support to 3iE totaled nearly \$294,000.

LEARNING AMONG PARTNERS TO IMPROVE FUTURE PROGRAMMING



Participants at the Sahel learning exercise in January complete a recent timeline of disaster intervention in the region. (Photo by Rachel Ingersoll/USAID)

During FY 2014, USAID/OFDA hosted two learning exchange workshops with partners to share lessons learned on thematic areas of humanitarian assistance and strengthen USAID/OFDA's culture of learning in ways that directly impact future responses and programming.

In January, USAID/OFDA invited approximately 40 participants—field practitioners and technical specialists from partner organizations, as well as regional experts from non-governmental organizations, U.N. agencies, donor governments, and other USAID offices—to Dakar, Senegal, to examine recent food insecurity and malnutrition crises in the Sahel Region, analyze evidence of best practices from USAID/OFDA-funded programs, and identify gaps in programming and areas for improvement.

During the four-day workshop, participants joined in group exercises, interspersed with panel discussions and expert speakers, to encourage thinking across the humanitarian sectors. The learning exercise included review of partner project documents and evaluations, as well as an online survey of aid workers responding to crisis between 2009 and 2011.

USAID/OFDA convened approximately 20 people for another learning exchange workshop in San José, Costa Rica, in September. Representatives from non-governmental organizations, as well as from the U.N. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Development Bank of Latin America, examined programs that incorporate urban disaster risk reduction, the economic recovery and market systems sector, and the cross-cutting neighborhood approach, which views neighborhoods as interrelated geographical units and seeks to understand and support ways that communities meet their basic needs. The two-day workshop allowed USAID/OFDA partners to present projects reflecting the three themes and discuss the best approaches to strengthening economic resilience—particularly for at-risk urban communities—and better enable those vulnerable populations to mitigate disaster effects while improving their ability to recover quickly following an emergency.

USAID/OFDA supported the two learning exchange workshops with \$105,000 in FY 2014 funding.

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